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STATE FOR WHA/CAR AND S/WE-AMB. TAHIR-KHELI
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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR KRAMER'S FAREWELL MEETING WITH FOREIGN
MINISTER MILLER

Classified By: Ambassador Mary Kramer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Summary: On October 25, Ambassador Kramer met with Barbados' Foreign Minister Miller. They discussed U.S.-Barbadian relations, the continued deadlock over the GRULAC UN Security Council Seat, and planning for Caribbean Heritage Month celebrations in 2007. End Summary.

"Things are Looking Up"

¶2. (U) In her last official farewell meeting, Ambassador Kramer called on Barbados' Foreign Minister, Dame Billie Miller. Dame Billie thanked Ambassador Kramer for three years of hard work which has resulted in a "genuine reengagement" and noted that her CARICOM colleagues were equally pleased with the state of U.S. relations with the region and the assistance the United States has provided. Dame Billie also spoke enthusiastically about the two events hosted by Secretary Rice on the margins of UNGA in September.

She called Secretary Rice's meeting with CARICOM Foreign Ministers a "most excellent meeting" and the Women's Empowerment Strategy Session "extraordinary." On Women's Empowerment, Dame Billie expressed strong hope that Secretary Rice's initiative will be carried forward.

¶3. (U) Noting that the United States was the region's largest trading partner, Dame Billie applauded the U.S. initiative to revive the Trade and Investment Committee (TIC) and encouraged strong private sector participation. Ambassador Kramer agreed that the TIC could provide an impetus for even closer commercial ties between the United States and the region. As an example of the entrepreneurial potential that exists in the region, Ambassador Kramer mentioned a recent collaboration between a Barbados manufacturer of solar water heaters and U.S. developers of subsidized housing in Palm Beach, Florida.

¶4. (U) Dame Billie was also pleased by the prospect of arranging some highly visible events during the celebration of Caribbean Heritage Month in June 2007. She briefed Ambassador Kramer on the region's efforts to organize a conference on the Caribbean that would include academics, business leaders, and prominent members of the Caribbean diaspora. While Dame Billie also expressed interest in engaging with the insurance industry and other countries and U.S. states affected by hurricanes, she acknowledged that this is a sensitive issue and may not be popular in all quarters.

UNSC Seat: A "Time-Out" for Venezuela Unlikely

15. (C) Although she admitted that in similar cases the country with fewer votes would normally withdraw, Dame Billie seemed resigned to the possibility that the deadlock over the GRULAC UNSC seat could last for months. She thought it would be best for GRULAC to find a consensus candidate, but "consensus" was obviously the sticking point. With the international community already losing interest in the issue, she thought there would now be even less of an incentive for GRULAC to do anything but wait. She offered jokingly that in her family, one would have been sent to stand in a corner for behavior such as Venezuela's. However, it was clear that Barbados would do little to get Venezuela to take that much needed time-out.

Comment

16. (C) That Dame Billie would welcome warmer relations with the United States is indeed a sign of how much has changed in the past three years thanks to Ambassador Kramer's leadership and constructive engagement with the region. Dame Billie's often strident criticism of the United States on issues ranging from Iraq to Haiti to Article 98 has softened. She seems less disposed to chafe at the notion that Barbados lives "in the shadow of the United States," as she put it during her meeting with Ambassador Kramer. Her more conciliatory approach may also reflect the fact that Dame Billie is nearing retirement. She has already announced that she will not run again for her parliamentary seat, and if, as is increasingly expected, Prime Minister Arthur calls early elections, her term in the Ministry could come to an end within the next few months.

KRAMER